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PRESS RELEASE

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Nigerian Governors Partner with Dangote Foundation, Gates Foundation, and USAID to Bring Life-saving Vaccines to Children

Four northern Nigerian governors, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Bill Gates, and U.S. Ambassador James Entwistle agree to Memorandum of Understanding to improve routine immunization and strengthen primary health care

Kaduna, Nigeria – In a ceremony at the Kaduna State Government House, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, chair of the Dangote Foundation; Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, James Entwistle, joined governors from Kaduna, Sokoto, Yobe, and Borno to launch an ambitious new partnership committing political and financial resources to strengthen and sustain routine immunization programs that will save more lives and keep Nigeria polio-free.

The witnessing of new Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) served as an opportunity to review successes and lessons learned from existing programs in Kano and Bauchi states. To extend these efforts, the executive governor of Kano State signed a fourth-year extension to the state's existing MOU.

Professor I.F Adewole, Nigeria's health minister, congratulated the states and partners for making a significant investment in immunization. "These are tough financial times in Nigeria, but the health of children cannot wait. The country has an ambitious plan to introduce new life-saving vaccines over the next several years, and today's commitments will ensure we can get those vaccines to the children who need them most."

Through the MOUs, the governors commit to effective governance, leadership, and financial accountability to reduce child illness and death from diseases such as measles, pertussis, and hepatitis through increased routine immunization in their respective states. The other partners will bring the financial and technical support needed to operationalize the program. All signatories pledged to improve routine immunization coverage in northern Nigeria systematically and sustainably, where vaccine coverage rates are low.

"These agreements strengthen our partnerships with Nigerian states working to provide health services to all their citizens," said Dangote. "Building on their recent success in eliminating polio from the region, Nigerian governors have and will continue to play a vital role in establishing a legacy of sustained commitment to routine immunization."

The objective of the MOUs is to reach 80 percent of the target population in the signing states with the necessary life-saving vaccines by December 2018 to prevent common childhood

diseases and ensure a polio-free environment. To achieve this, key components of the program include the operationalization of the 'Primary Health Care Under One Roof' policy that will see a single management body oversee the program. The implementation of regular audits and reports will ensure transparent funding and financial discipline is paramount during implementation. Contributions towards the costs of the program by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Dangote Foundation, and state governments will be staggered across three years: 30 percent in year one, 50 percent in year two, and 70 percent in year three with the states taking progressive responsibility for financing immunization services.

“These commitments will improve immunization coverage and help provide reliable health services in Nigeria. The States will be able to reap the full return on their investment through the number of lives improved and saved, and communities will remain protected from vaccine-preventable diseases for years to come,” said Gates. “Nigeria’s governors have the opportunity to build health systems strong enough to stop future outbreaks.”

“These MOUs offer the model platform to capitalize on the prospects of evidence-based approaches. Results will include stronger systems for immunizations, equal access to routine immunization services, and building capacity for Nigerian states to lead in developing solutions for its people,” said Ambassador Entwistle.

